1: Gorer J-5 (1937) 1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

231 remarkably tame. Our diet was, alas, almost entirely confined to chicken, and we ate so many that we exhausted the supply of the immediate neighbourhood and fowls had to be brought in to us from distant villages. When they arrived carried in open-work baskets they would just be thrown out in front of the house; they would wander about the neighbourhood picking at the plants and occasionally flapping over the fences which shut in the fields; but they never tried to get away and every evening would come under the house for the grain they were given and would roost quite happily in the strange building. They very seldom run away and children can quite easily pick them up in their hands.[8] In the late evening the sight under the house where a number of animals are gathered together is very strange; cattle, pigs, goats, hens, dogs and cats are all tangled up in a heap sleeping on top of one another. Children have absolutely no fear of domestic animals, [857] and one of the favourite games of little boys of five and six is to play at butting matches with young goats.

462 Animals must never on any account be killed by a woman; this is the only complete and absolute prohibition of any form of activity for either sex. There are some acts which are more commonly or indeed exclusively practised by men or by women only, but there is no sort of prohibition for members of the other sex doing them if they feel so inclined. For example only women spin and only men weave baskets; but there is no reason why a man should not spin if he wanted to and knew how, and in point of fact some women do weave baskets and mats. There are some things which women's relative lack of strength prevents them doing, particularly dealing with the big blocks of wood necessary for house building; that is considered a natural limitation and is not a cultural law. Men are expected to be better tree climbers than women, but there are quite a few cases of women being more efficient at this than their husbands; the husband feels no humiliation at this superiority on the part of his wife nor is he laughed at by other members of the community; if anything he is rather lucky in having an exceptionally able partner. But for the killing of animals the prohibition is absolute. It would be a sin to eat, even unknowingly, an animal killed by a woman, though in that case the lamas can cleanse the unwitting offender by ceremonies and offerings

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[757] [8] There is an odd variety of fowl with almost black flesh and skin and a great number of rudimentary feathers. Although the colouring does not alter the taste this type is despised and is only used as a cure for orchitis.

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

159 for the girl to marry both brothers. If this is done only Pichi
585 will be required to carry out the ceremony; and having done
588 this he can hand the girl over to his younger brother. There would be no objection to him marrying what would theoretically be a second wife, should he later wish to do so.
159 In the meantime Pichi gets all the amusement he wants with
[937] his elder brother's wife. This he told me late one night when he was somewhat the worse for wear. In addition to his own
[191] language, he also speaks Sikkim Tibetan and is the only man in the village who can read and write Nepali. Because of this all official correspondence comes to him for translation. He has not yet fully readjusted himself to the simplicity of village life, but, even so, already thinks he would rather live at home.

[582] Datoop's wife is one of the most outstanding characters in Lingtem. She was married at twelve but did not live with her husband until after his return from Gangtok. Unlike most other women, she is often to be seen in charge
[462] of work and her orders are instantly obeyed. She has the reputation of giving good food at her house, but, according to Tafoor, would be a better cook if she took a little less to drink. She has a pleasing open face, but her appearance is somewhat spoilt by a missing canine tooth. She came originally from a village beyond Mangen, and still visits her old home occasionally, where her brothers are still living.
[301 She has better jewellery than any other women in the
423] village; this she bought with the proceeds of her private fields. In her opinion women have a hard time, and no private life at all. She thinks, however, that grown-up girls
[581] are glad to get away from home and that marriage is the best state for them. Like her husband she, too, is a Lama and holds the rank of Chötembu; and as such has the power to beat up people in the monastery. I asked her what sort
[684] of offences would merit her interference and she replied, without the slightest hesitation, "having sexual intercourse inside the building, or within its grounds." She added that it would be considered slightly shameful for a woman, although an Inebu, to beat a man; but nobody really minds.

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

But the settled areas of British India have an expensive British administration, for which, in the last instance, the peasant has to pay. This is not to deny, of course, that he gets certain benefits in return: good roads, schools, hospitals, and so on; but these are of more use to people who have already reached the higher economic levels. In the meantime the small tenant cultivator is forced to sell his own rice in order to pay his taxes, not to mention expensive litigation, which seems to increase steadily as conditions become ever more "settled." It seems all wrong to me.

* * * * *

Both men and women work in the fields, and there is no hard-and-fast division of labour between the sexes, although the heavier work is done mostly by men. Woman, as such, is an inferior being, but only because the Lamaist doctrine says so. "Even Buddhist nuns, excepting the very few so-called incarnations of celestial Bodhisats, are given an inferior position scarcely higher than lay devotees"; and to be born as a woman is a definite step backwards in the march towards Nirvana, the freedom from reincarnation, which is the goal of all true Buddhists. But this idea is completely foreign to the Lepcha, who does not recognise any inherent distinction between the temperament of the sexes; there is with them practically no such thing as "men's work" and "women's work."

Dr. Margaret Mead was the first to point out that the personalities of the two sexes are socially produced. Two of the tribes she studied in New Guinea had "no idea that men and women are different in temperament. They allow them different economic and religious rôles, different skills, different vulnerabilities to evil, magic and supernatural influences. The Arapesh believe that painting in colour is appropriate only to men, and the Mundugumor consider fishing an essentially feminine task. But any idea that temperamental traits of the order of dominance, bravery, aggressiveness, objectivity, malleability are inalienably

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

associated with one sex (as opposed to the other) is entirely lacking. This may seem strange to a civilisation which in its sociology, its medicine, its slang, its poetry, and its obscenity accepts the socially defined differences between the sexes as having an innate basis in temperament and explains any deviation from the socially determined rôle as abnormality of native endowment or early maturation. . . .

"The knowledge that the personalities of the two sexes are socially produced is congenial to every programme that looks forward to a planned order of society. It is a two-edged sword that can be used to hew a more flexible, more varied society than the human race has ever built, or merely to cut a narrow path down which one sex or both sexes will be forced to march, regimented, looking neither to the right nor to the left. It makes possible a Fascist programme of education in which women are forced back into a mould that modern Europe had fatuously believed to be broken for ever. It makes possible a Communist programme in which the two sexes are treated as nearly alike as their different physiological functions permit." (*Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*, 1935.)

Everything we saw in Jongu bears ample witness to the correctness of her views; and such differences as there are between the sexes are undoubtedly culturally conditioned, no inherent variation in temperament between them being recognised. This will perhaps be more apparent when we come to the subject of marriage.

Although we did not collect actual statistics, it is my impression that the Lepcha woman does considerably more physical work than the man. In addition to working all day in the fields, she has to cook, tend the children, and keep the house in order, and is often out searching for fuel: but the man is not above nursing the baby or cooking his meal when necessary. But since so many of the men are Lamas, and in consequence required to spend a great deal of time in the performance of their useless duties, the bulk of the work falls to the women. This is not, however, to relegate them to the

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

This is not, however, to relegate them to the position of domestic slaves; and while the laws of the state do not permit a woman to inherit land, she can, and does, own other property, and is an equal partner with her husband in the management of the household affairs.

In addition to the cereal food they raise, all the Jongu Lepchas keep pigs and cattle, which they slaughter from time to time. No attempt is made to breed from the best stock; nor is a bull ever taken to a cow, who "chooses her own husband," as Tafoor naïvely put it. All pigs are castrated when they are three months old, as they are considered to get savage after this age. Incidentally, it may be noted that the eating of uncastrated pig's flesh is believed to cause a man to become homosexual, a perversion which is practically unknown amongst Lepchas and regarded with disgust. There was only one known case in Lingtem, both parties being now old men with grown-up families. There is, as a matter of fact, no word in the Lepcha language for homosexuality, a man who practises it being called merely "one who has eaten uncastrated pig." This prohibition does not apply to women, and is ineffective outside the Lepcha tribe, Tibetans and Nepalese, for instance, being unaffected if they eat this flesh. Nor does it apply to the eating of wild boars, a particular delicacy which the Lepcha does not often obtain.

All domestic animals are regularly fed, and during monastery festivals I several times noticed men and women take a few scraps and give them to the stray dogs which hung around the place. The house-dog is kindly treated and, like all the other domestic animals, given a name. Pigs, chickens, and dogs are generally given the dregs of the fermented millet after it has been used for making *chi*, as a result of which the former are said sometimes to become inebriated, but I must confess that I have not myself seen a drunken pig. They also feed on human excrement, and may often be seen following people out to the fields for this purpose.

Sheep are not kept in Jongu, as the climate is thought to be too hot; but actually the dense forest would make grazing difficult. Nor does one ever see a horse or a mule, two

7: Hooker D-5 (1849-1851) 1854
AK5 Lepcha AK5

[582] future father-in-law, the parties being often united before
583 the woman leaves her parents' roof, in cases where the payment is not forthcoming, and the bridegroom prefers giving his and his wife's labour to the father for a stated period in lieu. On the time of service expiring, or the
585 money being paid up, the marriage is publicly celebrated by feasting and riot. The females are generally chaste,
581 and the marriage-tie is strictly kept, its violation being
[584] heavily punished by divorce, beating, slavery, &c. In cases of intermarriage with foreigners, the children belong to the
462 father's country. All the labours of the house, the field,
[567] and march, devolve on the women and children, or slaves if they have them.

164 Small-pox is dreaded, and infected persons often cruelly shunned: a suspicion of this or of cholera frequently emptying a village or town in a night. Vaccination has been
[751] introduced by Dr. Pearson, and it is much practised by Dr. Campbell; it being eagerly sought. Cholera is scarcely known at Dorjiling, and when it has been imported thither has never spread. Disease is very rare amongst the Lepchas; and ophthalmia, elephantiasis, and leprosy, the scourges of hot climates, are rarely known. Goitre prevails,* though not so conspicuously as amongst Bhoteeas,

* May not the use of the head instead of the shoulder-strap in carrying loads be a predisposing cause of goitre, by inducing congestion of the laryngeal vessels? The Lepcha is certainly far more free from this disease than any of the tribes of E. Nepal I have mixed with, and he is both more idle and less addicted to the head-strap as a porter. I have seen it to be almost universal in some villages of Bhoteeas, where the head-strap alone is used in carrying in both summer and winter crops; as also amongst the salt-traders, or rather those families who carry the salt from the passes to the Nepalese villages, and who very frequently have no shoulder-straps, but invariably head-bands. I am far from attributing all goitre, even in the mountains, to this practice, but I think it is proved, that the disease is most prevalent in the mountainous regions of both the old and new world, and that in these the practice of supporting enormous loads by the cervical muscles is frequent. It is also found in the Himalayan sheep and goats which accompany the salt-traders, and whose loads are supported in ascending, by a band passing under the throat.

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25. Lepcha children starting for field work

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26. Lepcha women planting rice

Fig. 23-24 p. 99

[End Plate 9]